



TRANSCRIPT

Episode # 20: Not Your Typical Episode On Bullies (Part 1)

You are listening to episode 20 of *Mastering The Power Skills*. Have you ever run into a bully in the work place? Well, if you haven't it's probably only a matter of time before you do. And as one of our listeners points out, while there's a lot of advice out there, somehow it doesn't feel very realistic or effective. Join us in this episode and you'll learn a strategy not only for thwarting a bully, but for coming out of the experience with even greater power and credibility.

How much more could you accomplish if you were 25% or even 50% more influential and persuasive? Welcome to *Mastering The Power Skills*, the podcast that provides you with the tips, strategies, and the inspiration to grow your own power and win support for your ideas. And now here's your host, C-suite leadership coach Kathy Dockry.

Hi everyone, I'm super excited about today's episode for a few reasons. First, I'm including a new approach to the podcast. I've been getting messages from listeners asking how to apply the power skills of influence, persuasion, and presence to particular work place challenges that they're encountering. So from time to time we're going to feature those challenges on this podcast and we'll explore them together. And this is going to be one of our new features.

Previous episodes have either been just me sharing different insights and techniques, or else interviews with experts who can provide us with fresh perspectives. But now, going forward, we'll also have episodes that function like your own personal workplace advice or coaching column.

You can simply write in and describe the situation you're dealing with and at least once a month I'll select one of those topics for the podcast and provide a game plan that will help you navigate that situation more effectively. Just email your inquiry to powerskills@significagroup.com and I'll let you know more. Oh, and don't worry if you're not in a location at the moment where you can write things down, we'll include that email address in the show notes for this episode.

But this approach of answering listener inquiries is not just an occasional shift of the format of an episode, it's also an approach that really resonates for me because I'm all about making your life in the workplace simpler, easier, and more

effective. I want you to become more powerful, so having the opportunity to address real time issues that we all encounter just kind of lights me up.

There's nothing better for me than helping people navigate through and eliminate challenges so they can focus on the important stuff. And that's delivering the value that they and only they can contribute in their role.

So the second reason that I'm excited today is because of the subject we're going to be discussing. One of our listeners sent in a list of interesting topics, and I plan to cover most of them. One particularly great question she asked though was, how to deal effectively with workplace bullies.

Our listener made a couple of very accurate observations when she asked me about this. The first is that bullying is a common issue and not just a hyped up topic. And I completely agree with that. I suspect sooner or later we will all encounter bullying behavior in our work lives. In fact, I also suspect that we won't encounter it once, but at least several times during our career.

I can think of three separate instances of bullying from colleagues over the course of my own corporate career, including a bizarre experience where my boss went from being a wonderful mentor to an outrageously vindictive bully, literally

overnight. Seriously, can you imagine how disconcerting and stressful that was? I'll tell you more about that particular incident later on in this episode, but my point of mentioning it now is to just illustrate that these are not rare occurrences that only a few people experience.

I personally love the workplace and all its complexities, it really energizes me. But let's get real, anytime you get a lot of smart, ambitious, and even slightly competitive people together, things are bound to get unnecessarily complex and funky from time to time. And our listener is absolutely right in suggesting that this is a real issue that we need to be prepared for.

The other observation our listener made is, and I quote, "I have found a void of legitimate options and suggestions for the issue of bullying, whether it be a peer or a supervisor." To which I reply, amen to that. I suspect that there are a lot of you who feel the same way. There is a plethora of articles on the causes of bullying, and the dynamics of bullying, and the damage that results from bullying.

But when it comes to bullying in the workplace, the guidance about how to handle that feels, well it feels a little weak and unrealistic, doesn't it? For example, there are countless recommendations to go to a higher level manager or to HR. But in the real world, those other people might not be well equipped to handle the situation skillfully.

Remember my own situation with a boss who abruptly changed from my biggest supporter to my biggest detractor overnight? I had valid reasons to think twice about enlisting anyone else in giving me the support I needed or actively coming to my rescue, whether it was his own manager or HR. And that's not because there was a particular problem with HR or with my boss's manager, I thought both resources had integrity and would probably take my concerns pretty seriously.

But my boss was a very good political operator. He was very smart, he was very politically savvy, and he had good connections throughout the organization. Heck, that's one of the reasons I had enjoyed working with him in the first place, I could see that I could learn a lot from him.

So the risk of reporting this situation to others was this, if HR or his manager talked to my boss, I knew his style, he quite likely would have denied the behavior or simply characterized it as a misunderstanding. And then he definitely would have found other much more subtle methods to make my life miserable. In other words, the problem wouldn't have been solved and quite likely would have gotten worse.

Some of the other advice we get on bullying includes suggestions about actively calling the bully out or sometimes having a thoughtful conversation with him or her offline. But there again, how effective is a candid logical conversation going to be with someone who is a true bully, like my former boss?

There's a big risk that what looks good on paper will only bait the bully. He or she could become defensive, or blow up, or may even get more aggressive with us. Your workplace experience could move from merely challenging to being absolutely intolerable.

And then finally, many experts say if all else fails you should move to a different part of the company or find a completely new job. And, of course, there's no doubt that those options can be highly effective in terms of escaping the bullying. But shouldn't there be some prior actions we can take to fix the issue without uprooting our current work life?

And don't forget, we can also pay other prices by making a move. Starting over can be hard and the new role or job may not have some of the advantages of our current role.

So our listener's observations are very good ones. And I'd like to share a completely different perspective on the workplace bullying situation. I'm going to share with you a step-by-step roadmap. It's a roadmap that will guide you through the complex dynamics of bullying behavior so that you have a very high likelihood of navigating it successfully, and a much lower risk of suffering any damage in the process.

It's not a roadmap that completely ignores the people and the resources that you may need to tap into along the way. But it is one that puts you squarely in the driver's seat. And here's the thing about a solution that puts you in the driver's seat, it makes all the difference in the world because you know what we really find unsatisfying about all those articles that talk about bullying? It's that they all share the point of view of the bully.

In other words, the point of view that we're a victim. The bully thinks we're a victim to be exploited. And all those kindhearted articles, they all think we're a victim to be protected. But let me ask you, do you actually like thinking of yourself as the victim? I suspect you don't. Wouldn't it feel much better, and in fact be more accurate, to see yourself as a smart, savvy, empowered person? I know I would.

And if you think about it, doesn't it sound like a solution where you act like the person you are, smart, savvy and empowered, is much more likely to be successful? Of course it would be. The only thing holding you back is the how. In other words, having a good roadmap that shows you step-by-step how to handle bullying behavior. And in this episode I'll give you that roadmap so you can navigate the difficult terrain and come out the other side with a satisfactory result.

Now, just in case you're asking yourself, why do I have to be the one to figure this out? I hear you. Bullying sucks and you absolutely don't deserve it. In a perfect world, organizations should be designed to completely eliminate bad behavior. I'm not at all suggesting that companies don't have the responsibility to create environments where bullying isn't tolerated and it's quickly stamped out.

But here's the thing, no matter how well managed a company is, bullies will pop up from time to time. And when that happens, companies don't always have a good track record of addressing a particular dynamic in a prompt and effective way. That's not necessarily because companies are negligent or because they have bad intent. It's because bullies, and a few other toxic personalities, are generally very good at exploiting the system itself, as well as the individuals that they victimize.

Yes, most of the time companies do end up tackling the problem of a bully, especially if he or she becomes very visible or goes too far. But often the bully is more skillful than the people who want to fix the situation. And fixing the situation can take a while, sometimes years. And in the meantime, you and I can feel on our own trying to navigate a challenging situation. So that's why I want you to have a roadmap. You're going to need to have a plan for how to navigate things because it may take some time before help arrives.

Finally, remember what this podcast is all about. It's about teaching you the power skills so that you become more empowered. And dealing with a bully is a classic illustration of why we need the power skills, because a bully is all about power, just the bad use of power.

In fact, here's one of the dictionary definitions of a bully, a blustering, mean or predatory person who, from a perceived position of relative power intimidates, abuses, harasses or coerces people, especially those considered unlikely to defend themselves. In other words, a true bully is using power as a villain would, for his or her own ends.

And I'm an advocate for growing your power as a hero or heroine would, so that you can accomplish meaningful things and create safe and productive environments. So while I wouldn't wish a bully on anyone, when we're

unfortunate enough to meet up with one we have some important questions to ask ourselves, Are we going to cave in or seek protection? Well, sometimes, in fact, that's our only choice.

But we also have another option, we could use this as an important milestone in developing our own leadership capabilities and our own power. Sure, it's likely to be a tough and perhaps sometimes painful challenge. But this is the way we grow and live into our full potential, by learning how to cope with and even master difficult challenges.

I'm going to assume that since you're listening to this podcast, you want to hear more about how you actually can take on a bully and then learn, grow and become more empowered by that experience. So let's get going on that. I'm going to start giving you your step-by-step roadmap for navigating a bullying situation.

Step number one is deciding what your goals are for navigating this situation. In other words, what does a satisfactory result look like to you? Before you get going on your journey, you have to decide on what your destination is, right? It's important to know that because along the journey you may encounter unexpected circumstances that cause you to change your route.

Each time that happens, knowing where you want to end up will help you make better decisions on the day to day aspects of your journey. Only you can decide the best goals for yourself, but I'll share with you what I think about so you're not starting from scratch.

When I've encountered bullying situations in the past I try to design an approach that meets three essential goals. The first goal, of course, is to eliminate or at least greatly reduce the bullying behavior. The second goal is to minimize any unintended fallout. I don't want any negative impact on my reputation and I don't want to create the risk that the bully finds more ways of retaliating against me.

And the final goal is to come out of the experience with my credibility and my reputation either maintained or even improved. In other words, I want to earn respect for the way I handled things.

When I set these goals I don't know for sure that I can reach them, but they help me define what my desired destination is. And as I embark on my journey I have some guidance that helps me decide what my next step is. Do I turn left? Or do I turn right at the crossroads? Do I take the direct road? Or do I take the indirect road?

Notice that I didn't mention other goals. I could have said that I want the bully punished. I also could have said my goal was to have other people protect me. Neither of these goals is bad, and in fact they could be the right ones for you given your particular situation. But for me, they're more backup strategies than my primary goals. They can complicate things and endanger a really good outcome for you if you make them your primary goals.

For example, I tend to think that punishing the bully is not my job in the moment. I'm not in the business of being a vigilante. If, for some reason, the organization doesn't eventually step in and hold that person accountable, well I guess down the road I might take some action. My point of view is that I have a long memory and I'm kind of good at growing my power, bwahaha.

What that means is, if the bully doesn't learn a lesson, then at some later point in time I hope to be able to take steps to ensure the bully experiences consequences for his or her behavior, if that's appropriate. But I'm not going to make it my primary goal in the moment.

And having as a goal getting other people to step in and protect you might, and then again it might not, be an appropriate action to take as you follow your

roadmap. We'll talk more about that soon. But it shouldn't be a primary goal, since it runs the risk of inadvertently making you look like a victim versus a strong, empowered leader.

So after you have the goals for your roadmap, reduce the behavior, minimize the fallout, and maintain our credibility and reputation, what is step two in our roadmap? Well, the start of your journey happens to be a fork in the road. You start things off by deciding whether to go right or to go left. And you make your decision by asking yourself the question, is this person truly a bully or are they simply exhibiting bullying behavior?

Now, before you throw up your hands and walk away, bear with me here and I'll explain why this is such an important question for you. The reality is that there's a difference between someone who intends to bully you and someone who doesn't intend to bully other people. That second person quite likely manages their emotions ineptly and inappropriately.

When they feel fear, or anxiety, stress, or even enthusiasm, they can engage in behavior that feels bullying to other people. It's important to try to understand which kind of person you're dealing with because the steps you should take to resolve the situation are different for the two categories of people.

And statistically the vast majority of workplace bullying is actually done by people who are not actively intending to bully other people. So you don't want to inadvertently use the strategies and the tactics that work for a true bully on someone who simply has behavior management issues.

Now, in this particular episode we will be talking about people who are true bullies, in other words they intend to bully you. How to deal with people who don't intend to bully you is also a lengthy discussion, and it deserves its own episode. So in next week's episode we'll be exploring in detail the roadmap for that kind of situation.

Okay, so let's take a little time here to explore the question of how you figure out which situation you're dealing with. Do you take the right fork or the left fork? Are you dealing with a true bully, or simply someone who exhibits bullying behavior? To figure that out, you need to get curious.

Put aside your own feelings for a moment and reflect on the situation the way a scientist would. Think about the larger context, not just the particular incident. You want to talk discreetly to trusted colleagues and get their perspective on the personality and situation of the person that you feel bullied by. Collect some

more data and then sit down and assess it. You'll want to be looking for signs that you're dealing with an intentional bully or not.

So what are some signs that suggests this person isn't an intentional bully? Well, first, we know that the statistical odds are that they aren't. Being an imperfect human being is much more common than being a true bully. Another sign is if the person generally has a good reputation or a decent reputation, but is known to overreact in certain situations and those situations exist here.

So maybe they start lashing out and sniping when they feel under stress or they feel overwhelmed. Maybe they get too domineering when they're excited and passionate about something. Maybe they get angry when they fear for their job or feel insecure or threatened by someone. In other words, they're a person who isn't, and they're not perceived to be, a toxic person but they can act out when they get triggered.

And here's another great sign that you're not dealing with a real bully, how do the people who have worked with that person the longest feel about him or her? If they say something like, "So and so is great, you just have to get used to him," then chances are this person doesn't intend to bully.

Instead, they let themselves get carried away by their emotions in a way that can feel like bullying to people who don't know them well. But the people who have worked with them for longer understand that those behaviors don't reflect the person's true intent. And they have either learned to tolerate the behavior or avoid triggering it.

On the other hand, what are some of the signs that you're dealing with a true bully? Well, certainly, if other people are saying, "Watch out for so and so, they like to bully other people," that's well worth paying attention to. But often you don't even need that obvious confirmation.

A true bully is going to make it feel personal. You're going to sense some direct malice or intentional dislike directed your way, versus some generally rude behavior. In fact, often a true bully is enjoying themselves and having fun when they bully you. They want you to know that you're being bullied because they want you to suffer.

So remember my former boss who went from being a trusted mentor to cold and vindictive overnight? Well, of course, I was distressed and for weeks I asked him if I had done something inadvertently to upset him. But whenever I asked, he just smiled. His eyes sparkled and he said, "I don't know what you're talking about."

And when I finally stopped asking, he would often linger in the hallway outside my office, chit chatting with his friends and making snarky, derogatory comments about me just loud enough so I could hear. He wanted me to suffer and he enjoyed the fact that he was doing that.

Another sign that you're dealing with a true bully is their appetite for status and privilege, and their obvious desire to use whatever power they have in a controlling way. That also makes things pretty clear for you. You won't be the only one who has that impression and you can confirm with others that they see this person as a true, intentional bully too.

And if the person you're dealing with doesn't seem to fit into either of these categories easily, then your assumption should be that this is a person who can indulge in bullying behavior that's not a true bully. That's a problem you'll want to deal with, of course, but check out episode 21 of this podcast, the one that we're going to have next week, for the strategies you'll want to use with this kind of person.

Okay, you've gone through step number one and decided that you're dealing with a true bully. So what's next? If you want to bring about the bully's downfall there

are three more steps. Step number two is manage your own mindsets and behaviors. Step number three is start leveraging your relationships. And step number four is start setting up the bully to make his or her behavior more and more obvious to a larger and larger audience.

So effectively you're going to start running a PR campaign, one where you're creating a platform for the bully to destroy him or herself. You're going to use your own power to create that platform and steer the bully to overuse his or her power in a way that makes the behavior so obvious that others have no choice but to act.

You must do all three steps to maximize your chances of success. But if you have patience and intelligence, your chances of success are very good. So are you a good chess player or a ninja? Well then game on, because you're about to outwit your bully. So let's dive down into these steps in a little more detail so you know how to execute your plan.

As I mentioned, step number two is you have to manage your own mindsets and behaviors. You're playing the long game and you want to hold on to your internal strength and power. Your mindset should be focused, patient, determined and nonreactive. That last one is important, bullies are expert in targeting our

emotional triggers, whether anger, resentment, fear, et cetera because they know that weakens us.

Now, of course, you will have feelings. But you want to be able to detach from them and not let them overwhelm you. You want to keep your sense of perspective and emotional equilibrium as best you can. Yes, this is tough. But this is the way you grow your strength and confidence, not just in this situation, but for the future. You're going to come out of this a tougher, stronger and more powerful leader if you do.

As for your behavior, this is also important because your whole strategy is based on making people stop, watch and see the bully. As a result they're also going to be watching and seeing you. What do you want them to be thinking of you when they're doing that?

If this were a movie and you wanted the actor playing you to be the perfect hero, how would you tell him or her to behave? Well, I would suggest the best version of you in this situation looks brave, calm and balanced, and perhaps even a little confused as to why the villain, in other words the bully in this movie, would even indulge in such dysfunctional and self-destructive behavior.

In fact, you might even look a little worried about the bully and what that bully is doing to themselves. You look that way because in contrast you are a strong and well-functioning leader. Gosh, this self-destructive person might need help.

Now, will you always feel this way on the inside? Quite likely not. But here's the beauty about acting as if you feel this way, over time you actually feel this way more and more. Inside you're serving as your own leadership coach and you're beginning to transform your own emotions and mindsets. In other words, you're growing your own power.

So, on to step three of this strategy, which is to start leveraging your own relationships. You want to start shining a bright light on the situation so that word starts getting out. First, if you have a posse of supporters around the organization, you want to let them know what is happening. I've referred to this concept of a posse several times in prior episodes and I'll probably get into that in even more detail in later episodes.

Everyone should be building a posse so that it's in place for times just like this. A posse serves as your communication network. It allows you to get the word out, it allows you to find out what other people are saying about the bully, and it also can be a great source of information as to what the bully is doing whenever that's not already clear to you.

Another way you want to get the word out, is to people you know higher up the food chain. But you want to make your intent very clear when you do this. If you look like you're complaining or asking for help, people might be concerned and helpful, but you're also going to look like a victim.

And remember, you want to come out of this looking powerful. It's much better to make it clear that you're merely informing them of the situation just to keep them in the loop. Or to privately ask them for their advice, because that's what a strong and confident leader would do.

For example, at a later point in my career I was on the North American management team of a European company. And my boss was in Europe, not North America. One of my local peers was a bully who ran our biggest subsidiary. And for some reason, to my surprise, she targeted me. At first she was careful about what she did when other people were around. But privately she had a habit of sending me nasty and abusive emails with no one else copied.

After I tried many times to help make this a better working relationship, I finally started forwarding copies of the emails to my boss in Europe. But when I forwarded them I always said something along the lines of, “Oh dear, it looks like

Carol is on the rampage again. Just forwarding this email to us so you know what's going on. She has a hard time keeping her focus on the stuff that matters, but no worries, I'll get her calmed down.”

Now, what do you think was happening over in Europe when I did this? Well, they started getting increasingly horrified by what Carol was doing. And also increasingly impressed with how brave and mature I was as a leader. Within a year there was a reorganization of the entire company and you can bet they used that as an opportunity to push Carol out. And as for me, well not only did I survive, but I got an amazing promotion as well.

So maybe your bully is smarter than Carol was and not sending you emails, you still are going to be bumping into people you know higher up when you're in the hallways or the elevators. Take the opportunity when you see them to bring them into the loop. But make it clear that you're not doing it as a victim.

For example you might say, “I'd love to get your advice on something privately. I'm having trouble developing the working relationship with Jim that I'd like. I'm not asking you to intervene, but I know you have some perspective on him and I'd like to sit down and pick your brain sometime for tips on how to manage the situation better.”

Almost everyone will agree to do this. And when you do sit down with them, you can give them specific examples of what you're experiencing. In other words, you're going to continue to shine a brighter and brighter light on your bully's behavior.

The final step of your strategy after you've done a good job of getting the word out, is to start setting up the bully to make his or her behavior more and more obvious to a larger and larger audience. What do I mean by that? Well, up to now you've been building the foundation for that platform on which the bully is going to self-destruct. Now you're actually going to get on that platform yourself and use yourself as bait.

This is where you need to keep your cool. If you've done a good job you're going to be perfectly safe, but it won't always be pleasant. You're going to be waving a red flag before the bull, or in this case your bully. Sorry about that pun. You're going to make him or her so enraged that they start getting stupid and behave outrageously in front of other people.

And you're going to do this by doing perfectly reasonable things that no one would fault you for. But because you know your bully, he or she is going to be

triggered and behave badly. You're simply going to give them the rope and let themselves hang with it.

What does this look like? Well, here's a few examples. Remember Carol, my peer who was bullying me? I had inherited an office from someone who had recently retired. It was an office that Carol perceived as more desirable and it contained some memorabilia that the previous occupant had left behind for the next occupant.

Now, Carol had no leverage to take the office away from me, but she did demand that I give her a pair of small statues that were historically linked to the company. Now, could I have given her those statutes as a goodwill gesture? Well, of course I could have. And that's what I normally might have done with a good colleague. But Carol asked me rudely, and besides she already had a history of bullying me.

So I decided to do something very fair and even generous, I offered to split the pair of statues and give one to her, leaving one with me. A normal person would have been happy with the compromise. But Carol wasn't exactly normal and I knew she wasn't going to be happy. And sure enough, I got another highly abusive email. It was a doozy and it made her look unhinged and even dangerously aggressive.

You can be sure that it seriously damaged her relationship with our European management when I calmly forwarded it to them, just to keep them in the loop. As Carol got more and more angry with me, she began to be more visibly antagonistic to me during meetings that included me and our peers. Because she was pretty powerful within the company I could have simply caved in or tried to appease her in front of everyone.

Or I could have started actively fighting her, but then inadvertently made myself look aggressive as well. So instead, I used a technique that some of us describe as calling out. That's where you actively, but very calmly, say out loud that you're observing the behavior or emotion of the other person and want to understand better where it's coming from.

Here's an example of that. I would say, "Carol, it looks like you're upset about something. Help us understand why that is so we can take care of that for you." And if Carol got passive aggressive and denied being upset, I would calmly persist by saying things like, "Well, your voice got loud or your face looked angry, are you sure you're okay? Is there something we all need to talk about so you can get to a better place? I want to make sure I do my best to make this work for you."

Now, a normal person will engage in good faith with what you're saying. You're being very reasonable, mature and helpful. But most bullies will go ballistic with this approach. And that's exactly what Carol did. She would have a verbal temper tantrum or she would say something nasty and abruptly leave the room.

And when she did, I'd look at everyone else and say, "Gosh, I'm getting worried about her. If she's behaving like this over something so small, how is she behaving with other people?" You better believe that everyone else in the room was horrified, and soon would be calling up their own management in Europe to let them know that Carol was going off the rails again.

I kept turning the light brighter and brighter on Carol so everyone could clearly see who Carol was. And eventually it was impossible to ignore. The company knew that she had to go. And it also knew that I looked like a strong but fair leader versus a victim or an enabler.

So a fair question to ask is, does this approach always work? And in all honesty, sometimes the odds will be stacked against you. Maybe your bully is too clever to fall for some of this. Although many times he or she is just a one trick pony and I find most bullies are kind of surprisingly dumb. Or maybe the culture of your company is just too toxic and it never gets around to taking the right action.

But most of the time I've seen many companies, and most actually get around to addressing these situations, even if they're slow about it. But if you're patient and methodical, this approach has a high rate of success. And how do I know that? Because I've given this approach to my clients for the past 20 years and it almost always works.

And I also tell my clients that even if it doesn't work for them, they should still try it out. Because even if you don't get the bully kicked out, you still have gotten stronger and grown your reputation and your power. And once you've done that, you're in a far better position to actively ask for help.

You've created a clear record of abuse that has been witnessed by other people. And you can now take steps to actively report the bully to the highest level of management. Or you can just leave the company altogether, confident that you are now a stronger person than you were when you first began.

That's what happened to me when I encountered my first bully. Remember that boss early in my career who suddenly turned overnight from a friend and mentor into my worst nightmare? It took me a while to figure out what to do. I was heartbroken and I had never been in a situation like that before.

But after a while I calmed down and I put together my strategy. I took the high road in all my behaviors and I cultivated a calm and focused mindset. I started widening and deepening my network throughout the company. And I learned not to rely solely on my boss for information and for relationships. And without complaining, I looked for opportunities to make his behavior visible to others, where it would start reflecting poorly on him.

And things actually did start getting better as a result. My boss could see that the tide of public opinion was turning against him. And he was smart enough to backpedal a little and not be so outrageous. And my performance was so obviously good to everyone that he couldn't retaliate against me through poor performance reviews or raises.

However, it was clear he still felt animosity towards me. And after almost two years of this, I had had enough. I went to my boss's manager and I said, "You've got to help me out here. Here's what my boss has been doing to me for the past two years. And here are all the witnesses from around the company who are happy to verify what I'm telling you. It's not a tolerable situation and action must be taken."

And that's when the reason behind all this bullying finally emerged. Two years before, when the bullying had first started, the company had done succession planning for my boss's manager. And in previous years there had only been one potential successor for him. That successor was my boss. But in that particular year they had added another potential successor to the list, and that successor was me.

Now, I knew absolutely nothing about that exercise, of course. But my boss had found out. And being the real bully that he was, he started lashing out at me even though I had nothing to do with the situation and was completely loyal to him. You better believe that the company took action to stop the bullying immediately.

And my boss denied, denied denied. But by that time what had happened was pretty obvious and he had endangered the likelihood of being his boss's successor. He ended up never being that successor. And what happened to me? Well, several months later, the decision was made to split the company in two and I was offered the role of second in command for one of those two companies.

In other words, they asked me to go from the middle of the legal department to one of the most powerful business operational roles. It was an astounding

vindication and vote of confidence in me as a leader. And it never would have happened if I hadn't first tried to take on the bully myself through the strategy that I described in this episode.

The offer was also too late because in the previous months I had been discussing another great opportunity with another company and I had just accepted their offer. The culture in my first employer just didn't seem like a good long-term bet and I was ready for a fresh start. But I had learned how to be strong and I had learned what skills are necessary to take down a real bully.

And I took those skills with me. And five years later when my peer, Carol, started bullying me, she didn't stand a chance. Now, I'm not a fan of workplace politics and unnecessary fighting. I normally shrug off the normal dysfunctional behavior you can get when you put a lot of smart, high-achievers in the room.

But sometimes the fight gets brought to you, even when you weren't looking for one. And when that happens, you have a question to ask yourself. Do you use it as an opportunity to grow your own power and strength as a leader or do you not? Only you can answer that question, but I hope you now realize you have a roadmap, not only for surviving a bully, but thriving as a leader because of your experience with that bully.

And that's what I want for all the listeners of this podcast, to step into the strongest and best versions of themselves so that they can go on to achieve meaningful things in their careers. Things that will make a positive difference for us all, really.

So all right my friends, we've come to the end of part one of our exploration of bullies. Next week in part two, we'll tackle the more common scenario, the situation where the person has bullying behavior, but not an intent to bully. In other words, they're not a true bully. I'm going to give you a different roadmap for handling that situation.

But for now, I hope you have an awesome week ahead and I'll see you in our next episode.

Hey there, would you like some personal guidance about how to use the power skills of influence, persuasion or presence on a particular situation in your work place? Well if so, we've got your back. Just send us a note explaining your situation to powerskills@significagroup.com, we'll drop that email address in the show notes. We'll feature your inquiry in an upcoming episode, keeping your

identity anonymous, of course, and make sure you have some tips and strategies to help you navigate your particular situation skillfully.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Mastering The Power Skills*. If you like what was offered in today's show and want more insights and resources from Kathy, check us out at www.significagroup.com.